



Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
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# Dr. M. H. Sullivan School

NEWPORT

## THE SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

April 29, 2005



### **School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)**

**The school accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## The Purpose and Limits of This Report

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Dr. M. H. Sullivan School from April 25-29, 2005.

The SALT visit report makes every effort to provide your school with a valid, specific picture of how well your students are learning. The report also portrays how the teaching in your school affects learning, and how the school supports learning and teaching. The purpose of developing this information is to help you make changes in teaching and the school that will improve the learning of your students. The report is valid because the team's inquiry is governed by a protocol that is carefully designed to make it possible for visit team members to make careful judgments using accurate evidence. The careful exercise of professional judgment makes the findings useful for school improvement because these judgments identify where the visit team thinks the school is doing well, and where it is doing less well.

The major questions the team addressed were:

- ◆ *How well do students learn at Dr. M. H. Sullivan School?*
- ◆ *How well does the teaching at Dr. M. H. Sullivan School affect learning?*
- ◆ *How well does Dr. M. H. Sullivan School support learning and teaching?*

The following features of this visit are at the heart of the report:

Members of the visit team are primarily teachers and administrators from Rhode Island public schools. The majority of team members are teachers. The names and affiliations of the team members are listed at the end of the report.

*The team sought to capture what makes this school work, or not work, as a public institution of learning. Each school is unique and the team has tried to capture what makes Dr. M. H. Sullivan School distinct.*

*The team did not compare this school to any other school.*

*When writing the report, the team deliberately chose words that it thought would best convey its message to the school, based on careful consideration of what it had learned about the school.*

**The team reached consensus on each conclusion, each recommendation, and each commendation in this report.**

The team made its judgment explicit.

This report reflects only the week in the life of the school that was observed and considered by this team. The report is not based on what the school plans to do in the future or on what it has done in the past.

This school visit is supported by the Rhode Island Department of Education as a component of School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT). To gain the full advantages of a peer visiting system, RIDE deliberately did not participate in the active editing of this SALT visit report. That was carried out by the team's Chair with the support of Catalpa. Ltd.

The team closely followed a rigorous protocol of inquiry that is rooted in Practice-based Inquiry™ (Catalpa Ltd). The detailed *Handbook for Chairs of the SALT School Visit, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* describes the theoretical constructs behind the SALT visit and stipulates the many details of the visit procedures. The *Handbook* and other relevant documents are available at [www.Catalpa.org](http://www.Catalpa.org). Contact Rick Richards at (401) 222-4600 x 2194 or [ride0782@ride.ri.net](mailto:ride0782@ride.ri.net) for further information about the SALT visit protocol.

SALT visits undergo rigorous quality control. Catalpa Ltd. monitors each visit and determines whether the report can be endorsed. Endorsement assures the reader that the team and the school followed the visit protocol. It also assures that the conclusions and the report meet specified standards.

## Sources of Evidence

The Sources of Evidence that this team used to support its conclusions are listed in the appendix.

The team spent a total of over 106 hours in direct classroom observation. Most of this time was spent in observing complete lessons. Almost every classroom was visited at least once, and almost every teacher was observed more than once. Also 32 hours were spent in conversations with teachers, staff and administration over the course of the visit.

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 33.5 hours in team meetings spanning the five days of the visit. This time does not include the time the team spent in classrooms, with teachers, and in meetings with students, parents, and school and district administrators.

The team did agree by consensus that every conclusion in this report is:

- ◆ *Important enough to include in the report*
- ◆ *Supported by the evidence the team gathered during the visit*
- ◆ *Set in the present, and*
- ◆ *Contains the judgment of the team*

## Using the Report

This report is designed to have value to all audiences concerned with how Dr. M. H. Sullivan School can improve student learning. However, the most important audience is the school itself.

How your school improvement team reads and considers the report is the critical first step. RIDE will provide a SALT Fellow to lead a follow-up session with the school improvement team to help start the process. With support from the Newport School Department School Improvement Coordinator and from SALT fellows, the school improvement team should carefully decide what changes it wants to make in learning, teaching, and the school, and amend its School Improvement Plan to reflect these decisions.

The Newport School Department, RIDE and the public should consider what the report says or implies about how they can best support Dr. M. H. Sullivan School as it works to strengthen its performance.

Any reader of this report should consider the report as a whole. A reader who only looks at recommendations misses important information.

## 2. PROFILE OF DR. M. H. SULLIVAN SCHOOL

The Dr. Michael H Sullivan School is located in the north end of the City of Newport, Rhode Island, and it serves a Pre K–Grade 5 student population. It first opened its doors in 1955 and is the most recently constructed of the six elementary schools in Newport. To accommodate increased student numbers, the school underwent expansions in 1967 and again in 1969. In recent years, Sullivan has undergone several major and minor projects to update and maintain the building. These include asbestos abatement, window replacement, interior painting, and the installation of new heating and fire protection systems. It is the only "neighborhood" elementary school in Newport, with approximately 80% of its students coming from the residential areas around the school.

The Sullivan School faculty and staff of approximately 50 provide students with various supports and services. Led by a principal and an assistant/substitute to the principal, 25 teachers, a half-time school nurse, a third-time school psychologist, a half-time clinical social worker, a full-time Family Services Coordinator, a full-time permanent substitute, a full-time Behavioral Specialist, and a part-time Mathematics Coach, 14 paraprofessionals, three managerial aides to students, three office personnel (one full-time, two part-time), and two full-time custodians service the school. A managerial Head Teacher, two educational lead teachers/coaches, and three Literacy Coaches, who provide direct service to students and teachers, are embedded within the faculty.

Of the 216 students at Sullivan, 42% are African American, 27% are Hispanic, 27% are white, approximately 2.5% are Native American, and approximately 1.5% is Asian/Pacific Islander. Twenty-five percent of the students are English Language Learners (ELL), and 38% receive Special Education services. Also, 85% of Sullivan's students receive government subsidized free or reduced-price lunch.

Sullivan's classroom structure includes one class of Kindergarten (inclusionary), two Grade 1 classes, two Grade 2 classes, one Grade 3 class, two Grade 4 classes, and two Grade 5 classes. Sullivan Elementary School is also the site of various programs that serve the entire district. These include four sections of Inclusionary Preschool for students aged three and four, a Head Start satellite for students who qualify and need this service, and an inclusionary Behavioral Support program for students with specialized behavioral needs.

Sullivan is classified as a Title One "school-wide" school under the No Child Left Behind Act. In response to an increasing need to support families, a Family Center was created in 1995. A Child Opportunity Zone (COZ) forms the backbone of a comprehensive body of services here. Seventy-one percent of Sullivan's students participate in after school academic and recreational programs each year that are administered by the Family Center and delivered predominantly by Sullivan School faculty.

Sullivan students and faculty have significant "intra-district mobility." Because the teacher contract requires that teacher positions in the district be filled each year through a job fair process, the faculty undergoes changes from year to year. For students, this mobility is exacerbated by the existence of five other small elementary schools in Newport. To keep the number of students in each of these schools near class size capacity, the grade level section configurations in these schools change from year to year, making Sullivan students mobile, as they make the transitions from school to school, sometimes year to year. The vision of the entire Sullivan School community is to stabilize the student population by creating two sections at each grade level that would ensure that students who begin at Sullivan will stay until they have graduated from the 5th grade and then move to the district's Middle School. Stabilizing the "intra-district mobility" of the school faculty is also in Sullivan's vision for the future.



### **3. PORTRAIT OF DR. M. H. SULLIVAN SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT**

Sullivan School is located on park-like grounds at the north end of the historic City of Newport. From the moment one enters the school, a sense of calmness and warmth unfolds. The halls and classrooms are illuminated with creative student work and colorful educational displays. The students represent a highly diverse population. They love their school and all the adults within.

The principal is the backbone of this school and its driving force. She has a clear vision for the school's success. Her attention to detail and her managerial style, academic leadership, and tenacious follow-through move the school forward toward the goal that every student here will be successful.

The school is located in a community where disadvantage is prevalent. However, the school community is rich with a staff that is unbelievably caring and nurturing. Sullivan has great expectations of its students. The students in turn display a growing confidence in their abilities and chances for success in school, as well as in life. At Sullivan, everyone has a story, but everyone has a job- to learn. There is an exceptional air of collegiality and professionalism, which creates a positive learning environment. The faculty constantly pushes students and themselves to reach higher and higher levels of achievement. While they instill in their students a love of reading and writing and students are progressing, the teachers must now focus more directly on their students' basic skills.

The school community provides for its students and their families in both tangible and intangible ways. Sullivan is a true neighborhood school and a home to the families whose children attend here. The Family Center, various staff resources, and community partners cooperate to enrich the lives of students, parents, and entire families and help them to achieve success.

The high hopes of Sullivan staff and students are overwhelming in spite of the fact that the school building needs renovation. Some classrooms are cramped and require both structural, as well as cosmetic, attention. Learning materials are in short supply. The heating system does not provide the school with moderated temperatures. The library needs to be expanded and refurbished. The paint there is peeling, the ceiling tiles are falling, and bookcases are insufficient to support the collection. The Family Center is housed in an inadequate portable classroom outside the school.

## 4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

### Conclusions

Students write without hesitation across the curriculum throughout the day and every day. The children accept that writing is an ongoing process that continuously requires them to work to improve and develop their skills. They are excited and confident when they share their writing with the rest of the class. They openly receive accolades, as well as constructive criticism, from both peers and adults. Students have powerful conversations about their writing. They use rich vocabulary, share their ideas, and relate texts to their own lives. They are developing the ability to write for different purposes including their responses to literature, procedural writing, and non-fiction writing. Successful learning occurs across all grade levels through the students' effective use of the strategies of Kid Writing and Write Traits. Additionally, they learn quickly as they observe their teachers model "what good writers do," and they incorporate these strategies into their own writing. For the most part, students know how to use the language-rich resources they find in their classrooms to guide them in their writing. In contrast, students' knowledge and skills of writing conventions are just emerging as they use writing cues as their guide. They often find it difficult to apply, or they simply do not use, correct spelling, punctuation, and appropriate capital letters in their writing. While students strive toward proficiency when they revise their work to include rich detail and clarity, they have less success when they edit their writing for proper writing conventions. This difference in student writing proficiencies matches their performance on the 2004 New Standards Reference Examination writing subtests where 59% of students met or exceeded the standard in writing effectiveness, and only 38% met or exceeded the standard in writing conventions. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, talking with students, teachers, school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, meeting with school improvement team and students)*

Excitement among the students abounds at Sullivan School when a book is opened in the classroom during a Read Aloud. A hush falls over the room, as the story begins. Sullivan readers ask reflective questions about the story, make meaningful predictions, and infer by citing evidence. They eagerly “grow in their understanding of relationships between books and themselves, books and the world, and books and other books.” Students at all grade levels understand and use common terminology and dialogue when they discuss literature. For example, a first grade student is as comfortable as a fifth grade student when using the word ‘schema’ appropriately. Children also read intently to explore a book’s contents, whether it is independently, in pairs, or in small groups. Students understand the power of words, and they attempt to interpret the print they see throughout the school environment. When they encounter an unfamiliar word, they attempt to understand its meaning by using a variety of strategies such as context clues and writing on ‘sticky notes’ to gather information. Students throughout the school are motivated to meet the standard of reading 25 books a year, as they track their own progress in creative ways. However, many of them lack the skills to decode the written word. Sullivan students are improving readers—some more successful than others—but they all are on the right track. On the state assessments taken by fourth graders in the spring of 2003 and 2004, the percentage of students achieving the standard and achieving the standard with honors increased only slightly. On the same assessments, however, the percentage of students scoring below standard or showing little evidence of achievement decreased from 45% to 24%. The percentage of students who nearly achieved the standard has increased. Also, all student subgroups exceeded the 2004 Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) required by the No Child Left Behind Act. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, meeting with school improvement team, students, and district administrators, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing 2004 Information Works!, reviewing 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries)*

Students are strongly developing problem-solving skills. Throughout the day, one can observe them seeking information to meet academic, behavioral, social and emotional challenges. Students approach problems knowing what tools they have at their disposal and how they work. Through hands-on activities, they make concrete connections to abstract concepts and problems. For example, kindergarteners learn the concept of “same” by sorting teddy bears, and fifth graders learn to classify objects by weight. They are becoming adept at applying multiple strategies to solve problems by using pictures, symbols, numbers, charts, graphs, and written explanations. Students are engaged and enthusiastic when they solve problems. Collaboration with their peers is marked by meaningful dialogue. ‘Aha! moments’ occur, when students realize that they are successful problem solvers. As a staff member notes, the students are working so hard that you can almost see “brain smoke.” The math problem solving scores on the 2002-2004 New Standards Reference Examinations reveal a steady increase from 9% to 34% of the students meeting or exceeding the standard. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, meeting with school improvement team, students, school administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, school administrators, and PTO, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing 2004 Information Works!, reviewing 2002-2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, reviewing records of professional development activities)*

At morning meeting the principal says, “Sullivan School citizens will...” Students then gleefully and loudly chant, “Be respectful. Be responsible. Be safe.” This exercise sets the tone for a promising, productive school day. Students enter their classrooms with confidence; they understand that they are here to learn. The children know the adults in this school provide a ‘safe haven’ and will support them with their academic, social, and emotional needs. Students are inquisitive, active, attentive, and focused learners. They work diligently to face challenges, as they develop behavioral strategies to show respect for themselves and others. Students learn to make good choices because it is the right thing to do. They know bad choices result in consequences. During their group activities, they are accepting, respectful, and engaged as they complete their work. Their understanding and acceptance of classroom routines and expectations makes it possible for them to move smoothly from one task to another. They clean up their materials and prepare for their next lessons. Students have the attitude that learning is their job, and it is important to work hard to “get smarter.” *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, meeting with school improvement team, students, school administrators, and parents, reviewing district and school policies, reviewing classroom assessments, discussing student work with teachers)*

### **Important Thematic Findings in Student Learning**

Students:

- ◆ *Are engaged and enthusiastic about learning.*
- ◆ *Understand that learning is their job.*
- ◆ *Like coming to school.*
- ◆ *Know that the adults in the school will provide a safe haven.*
- ◆ *Are avid readers, effective problem solvers, and creative writers.*
- ◆ *Have powerful conversations using rich language.*
- ◆ *Have difficulty using writing conventions and sounding out words.*

## 5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING FOR LEARNING

### Conclusions

Sullivan teachers provide high quality writing instruction through the Writing Workshop format. Teachers constantly implement techniques they learn from professional development activities in Writers' Workshop and Comprehensive Literacy, and they effectively collaborate with their colleagues. They routinely integrate the support staff to help individualize their instruction and to meet the needs of each student. This practice is accomplished through conferencing, small group work, and peer collaboration. Teachers develop writing criteria with student input, and they encourage students to use the criteria to produce high quality work. Furthermore, teachers create a comfortable atmosphere that validates student responses, supports risk taking, and encourages young authors to share their ideas. Teachers help students connect their real life experiences to their writing. Even though they skillfully teach students to write creatively, they do not emphasize the importance of conventions. The only evidence of the use of conventions is the sporadic application of checklists such as CHIMPS (Capitalization, Handwriting, Indentation, Margins, Punctuation, and Spelling) in the intermediate grades and CSP (Capitalization, Spacing and Punctuation) in the primary grades. This inconsistent focus on conventions weakens the quality of student writing. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing district strategic plan, reviewing 2004 Information Works!)*

Teachers are passionate about reading and expose their students to high quality literature in all genres in both fiction and non-fiction formats. They saturate the students' environment with print in all subject areas and throughout the school to provide them with the keys to unlock the doors to the world. They use appropriate materials to meet the students at their levels of proficiency and help move them forward. Teachers use rich language to guide students during their lessons. In addition, they teach their students how to extract information, share their work, and question and build upon one another's responses. Teachers are doing an excellent job of teaching reading for meaning, but they are not effectively teaching the basic reading readiness skills. They rarely teach word work in all grades as comprehensively as they teach guided reading. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, reviewing 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing 2004 Information Works!, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, meeting with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators)*

Excellent problem solving at Sullivan extends far beyond the boundaries of math. Teachers work collaboratively to teach problem solving in a variety of situations. One example is “Sullivan Stars”—a program that encourages children to use good manners in conflict resolution. Other strategies include the use of T-charts, tallies, and drawing pictures to promote mathematical thinking. Teachers expect multiple solutions and written explanations to math problems. In science, math, and social studies, they teach skills for problem solving by providing students with hands-on activities. Teachers provide concrete experiences to which students later refer when tackling more abstract problems. During lessons, teachers use Accountable Talk™, which encourages students to probe their own thinking, access their prior knowledge, and make meaningful connections. These laudable practices support academic rigor, continuous achievement, and good citizenship in all students. While teachers are effective in teaching problem solving, they are just beginning to develop their skills in analyzing student work. This analysis is driving their instruction to better meet the needs of all students. *(following students, observing classes, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, meeting with school improvement team, students, and parents, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators)*

All adults at Sullivan are teachers! They are true professionals. There are no egos here; everyone is a role model from paraprofessionals, support staff, custodians, and certified teachers. These practitioners strive to enhance their own knowledge and abilities by engaging in many professional development opportunities. Their confidence in their abilities makes these adults effective and competent team members. They trust one another, which allows for effective collaboration and programming. The Sullivan team connects “like pieces of a puzzle.” This team goes beyond individual differences to drive the school’s mission, “to provide a nurturing, safe, and challenging environment where children and adults are successful learners and responsible citizens who respect and appreciate each other.” *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, meeting with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with teachers, school and district administrators, reviewing records of professional development activities, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing district and school policies, reviewing the Sullivan School Mission Statement, discussing student work with teachers)*

Ongoing professional development opportunities support research-based best teaching practices at Sullivan. Teachers attend workshops, trainings, and grade level meetings provided by the district. They deftly use these new skills to increase student learning. Coaches in both math and literacy ensure that pacing grade level skills and high expectations are well coordinated in all grade levels. Intra-school professional development includes collaborative conversations to support student learning. The staff developed and uses an innovative Comprehensive Assessment Protocol (CAP) system for looking at children’s work to drive its instruction. In addition, they effectively use the Teacher Support Team (TST) to address teachers’ concerns about students’ progress. *(talking with teachers and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing records of professional development activities, attending CAP and TST meetings)*

**Commendations for Dr. M. H. Sullivan School**

Dedicated, nurturing teachers  
Reflective practitioners  
Supportive, collaborative teachers  
Perception of each child as an individual  
High expectations for students  
Commitment to comprehensive literacy

**Recommendations for Dr. M. H. Sullivan School**

Instruct writing conventions on a consistent basis.  
Develop lessons to teach phonics and basic readiness skills at all grade levels.  
Continue to analyze student work to differentiate instruction.  
Continue to provide a language rich environment for your students.  
Seek professional development to hone your skills in writing conventions, phonics, basic readiness skills, and analyzing student work.

**Recommendations for Newport School District**

Continue to provide need-specific professional development opportunities to all staff at Sullivan School.

## 6. FINDINGS ON SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

### Conclusions

The principal is a consummate professional who sets the tone for the entire school. She is intelligent, compassionate, and a great communicator. Kids are her number one priority. If the principal knows a resource will benefit the students, she will find a way to obtain it. Students say she is a very determined person, that she understands what they are feeling, and that she helps them with their problems. The district administrators indicate, “The principal is tenacious. There is a resolve to solve all problems. ‘No’ is not an option!” She has a strong commitment to the students and their families. In conversation, she passionately states, “Poverty breeds hopelessness, and we are defeating that. We don’t have challenges we have needs. We all want the same thing. We want the students to be successful.” The dynamic principal is very skilled at sharing responsibilities and trusts her well-qualified staff to attend to family issues, behavior, and scheduling so that she can concentrate on being the academic leader. This strong leadership propels the school toward its goal to help all children “get smarter.” All this allows her professional staff to do what they do best—teach! The principal sets the tone for a successful school day by hosting an all-school morning meeting. As a result, students begin their daily work feeling confident, proud, and safe. She also shares her laser-like focus “that all children can succeed at high levels” with everyone who enters the school. Her vision drives effective instruction, high caliber learning, and positive citizenship. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, talking with students, teachers, parents, and school administrators, meeting with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents)*

Welcoming faces at Sullivan greet you immediately when you enter the school. A sense of community, trust, and respect exists among all members of Sullivan School. Students and staff follow the code of conduct, which states, “Be respectful. Be responsible. Be safe.” A warm, inviting climate for learning is evident in all areas of the school. Programs such as the code of conduct and morning exercises build character. These efforts focus on positive behavior and provide students with the structure and clear expectations they need to become productive members of Sullivan School and the community-at-large. Unfortunately, “intra-district transiency” of teachers and students has a negative impact upon the overall effectiveness of these fine programs. This involuntary movement in and out of the school requires constant training of staff and students in learning the basic fundamentals of the Sullivan mission. The school reports that its student achievement data show that students who stay within the school community perform better on their assessments than those who move back and forth. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, meeting with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, parents, and school administrators, reviewing district and school policies, reviewing Sullivan School Profile, reviewing The Sullivan School Report of Progress, 2004)*



Sullivan School does not exclusively depend on district funding. It is fortunate to have several outside sources of money. Members of the Sullivan School community seek money from grants to help fund the purchase of school materials, the library collection, field trips, and many other activities. Through many community partnerships such as those with New England Gas and Friends of Sullivan School, the Family Center, and Title I funds, Sullivan School is able to provide a vast array of programming, special events, and educational opportunities for families and staff members. Parents report, "Sullivan is doing so well because of the Family Center. Doors don't close at 2:15 [p.m.]. They're always open." Unfortunately, if outside resources become unavailable, the Sullivan community will suffer a devastating loss in its excellent programs and student support. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, meeting with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, parents and school administrators, reviewing district and school policies)*

The school is abuzz with activity! The school day does not end at 2:15 p.m. nor does the school year end in June. The district reports that Sullivan is the model for a year round learning community in Newport. After school and extended school enrichment programs, funded primarily through a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center grant, are available to all students from preschool to grade five. Seventy-one percent of the student population participates in these activities. The focus is to strengthen academic and literacy skills and provide students with opportunities to be exposed to a world beyond their neighborhood. Programs include, but are not limited to, book clubs, music movement activities, arts and crafts, sailing, basketball, Tae Kwan Do, and PowerPoint. These programs, which offer children a safe respite when they are away from home, rely heavily upon grant funds. The school and the Family Center work hard to ensure that these opportunities continue from year to year. *(following students, observing classes, reviewing Sullivan School Profile, meeting with school improvement team, students, school administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, parents, school administrators, Family Center staff, reviewing COZ documents)*

Sullivan School houses the district's only inclusionary behavioral support program for students. These students, who are in need of specialized behavioral supports and services, are provided with an education in the least restrictive environment. Ten students with various challenges are well supported here, as they are educated with their peers. These supports include para educators, the Special Education teacher, and a behavior therapist. In addition, a separate classroom is available where they can receive more individualized academic and behavioral support as needed. This program, although extremely successful, is not without its challenges. Staff members report that the training for working with these students is limited, and communication is inconsistent among various adults who work with students in this pilot program. *(talking with students, teachers, school administrators, reviewing district and school policies, observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, meeting with school improvement team, school and district administrators, and parents)*

The School Improvement Team centers its efforts on literacy. Therefore, in collaboration with Brown University, they developed the Sullivan School Learning Compact to focus on comprehensive literacy. The School Improvement Plan lacks the following components: numeracy, parental involvement, and student support services. Although there is evidence that these components are already in place at the school, this is not formally documented in the plan. In addition, a policy for addressing English Language Learners (ELL) in the regular classroom setting is not included in the plan, and there is not yet a formal program of direct instruction and monitoring in place for these students. *(reviewing school improvement plan, talking with teachers and school administrators, meeting with school improvement team, reviewing district and school policies, reviewing The 90/90/90 Schools: A Case Study from Accountability in Action)*

“The Dr. Michael H. Sullivan School first opened its doors to the community in 1955.” As the population grew, two additions were built on the school to accommodate the increasing number of students. An inviting playground and sports field are adjacent to the u-shaped building. Although the school has a basketball court, it is falling apart and is unsafe for students to use. Within its walls, the school is vibrantly decorated with student work and visual cues to assist the students in their learning. Structurally, the building is in good shape, but it no longer accommodates the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner. As one staff member exclaimed, “The school needs an extreme makeover!” The inefficient heating system results in inconsistent temperatures throughout the school. Using the small gymnasium also as the school lunchroom causes scheduling difficulties. The music room is located between two classrooms, which limits the volume of students’ musical expression. The cramped art room limits the choices students have to express their artistic talents fully. The dingy library is uninviting and inadequate, both in space and in its collection. This is in sharp contrast to the fine teaching that is occurring in this space. The Family Center is an integral part of Sullivan’s ‘whole child’ approach to tending to students’ social and emotional needs. However, the Center is located in a cramped trailer that sits outside the school, thus creating an unintentional separation among staff and a disconnect for parents and guardians. Everyone in the school voices the need for school renovation and cosmetic upkeep, and the SALT team agrees. The students deserve the best. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, talking with students, parents, teachers, school administrators, meeting with students, school and district administrators, and parents, reviewing Sullivan School Profile, reviewing district strategic plan)*

### **Commendations for Dr. M. H. Sullivan School**

Aggressively seeking and obtaining outside funding

A nurturing, safe, and child-centered environment

Teamwork among all stakeholders

Addressing the development needs of the whole child

Reciprocal respect among adults and students

Exemplary, inspirational principal

**Recommendations for Dr. M. H. Sullivan School**

Continue to seek outside funding to support your innovative programs and projects.

Continue to advocate for the reduction of “intra-district transiency.”

Explore creative ways to house music and art classes appropriately to optimize student learning.

House the Family Center within the school.

Provide ongoing professional development in crisis intervention training to all staff to facilitate the full inclusion of all students.

Include all special educators in all regular education meetings and trainings to improve communication among the various adults.

Advocate for the renovation, repair, and addition to Sullivan School. Expand the library collection.

Work with the district to develop a policy and structure for an effective ELL program to include direct services and monitoring.

Revise and update your school improvement plan to reflect the findings in this report.

Advocate for the continuation of the Positive Behavior Support Program, as it presently exists.

**Recommendations for Newport School District**

Increase the funding for school materials and programs for Sullivan School.

Reexamine the district policy regarding “intra-district transiency,” and stabilize teacher and student mobility for optimal teaching and learning.

Enlarge, renovate, repair, and paint the present school structure. Expand the library and its collection, and relocate the music and art rooms.

House the Family Center within Sullivan School.

Support the school with funding to rebuild the outdoor basketball court and proposed walking track.

Ensure that the Positive Behavior Support Program, as it presently exists, has the appropriate resources to continue beyond this current year.

Work with Sullivan School leadership to develop a policy and structure for an effective ELL program to include direct services and monitoring.

**Recommendations for Newport School Committee**

Make informed decisions based on what is best for the children at Sullivan School.

## **7. FINAL ADVICE TO DR. M. H. SULLIVAN SCHOOL**

It is very clear that Sullivan School is worthy of the district's designation as a "model school for the district." The administrators, teachers, staff, and support personnel here are dedicated professionals who have clear and high expectations for all students. You have made a strong commitment to build positive relationships with your students and maintain a partnership with their parents. Continue to enrich and expand the horizons of your students through the many special programs and experiences you offer them.

You are diligent in your efforts to address the many needs of your students and their families. The care and services you provide them ensure that students are ready to learn every day. Continue to "take the services to the children, instead of the children to the services." Continue to welcome all children and their families who are in need. They are very appreciative. When asked how they would improve this school, parents report, "This school doesn't have to change a thing," and "I wish all of my kids could have come to this school!"

Continue to use research-based strategies acquired during your professional development, and share what you learn. You are doing excellent work as reflective practitioners, as you analyze student work and endeavor to differentiate your instruction. Continue your focus on comprehensive literacy and your efforts to improve math instruction. Continue your successful work in these areas, but focus now on basic skills instruction in reading and writing conventions.

The morning meetings go a long way toward fostering a sense of community and promoting the code of conduct: respect, responsibility, and safety. Your students obviously enjoy this time of coming together, and they begin the school day with a clear focus on learning.

Remain focused, and continue to advocate for your school. Continue to model good citizenship, and instill the values of respect and responsibility in your students. You live by your motto "get smarter" along with your students as they continue to grow and succeed. Share and celebrate your successes. This is an impressive school. Keep up your good work. Your students are fortunate to be the recipients of your many efforts on their behalf.

## ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

### Dr. M. H. Sullivan School

April 29, 2005

Catalpa Ltd. monitors all SALT visits and examines each SALT visit team report to determine whether it should be endorsed as a legitimate SALT report. The endorsement decision is based on procedures and criteria specified in *Endorsing SALT Visit Team Reports*. (available on Catalpa website). Catalpa Ltd. bases its judgment about the legitimacy of a report on these three questions:

Did the SALT visit team and the host school conduct the visit in a manner that is reasonably consistent with the protocol for the visit?

Do the conclusions of the report meet the tests for conclusions specified in the visit protocol (important, accurate, set in present, shows the team's judgment)?

Does the report meet the tests for a report as specified in the visit protocol (fair, useful, and persuasive of productive action)?

Using the answers to these questions, the final decision to endorse the report answers the overall endorsement question: Is this a legitimate SALT team visit report? In order to make this determination, Catalpa weighs all the questions and issues that have been raised to decide whether a report is legitimate or not. While it is possible that a challenge related to one of the three questions listed above would be serious enough to withhold or condition the endorsement, it is more likely that issues serious enough to challenge a report's legitimacy will cut across the three questions.

While the SALT visit protocol requires that all SALT visits are conducted to an exceptionally high standard of rigor, visits are "real-life" events; it is impossible to control for all unexpected circumstances that might arise. The protocol for the conduct of the visit is spelled out in the *Handbook for SALT Visit Chairs*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition.

Since unexpected circumstances might result in either the team or the school straying too far from the protocol for a visit, Catalpa monitors both the school and the team during a visit regarding the conduct of the visit.

Most often actual visit events or issues do not challenge a report's legitimacy and Catalpa's monitoring and endorsement is routine. A district administrator, principal, faculty member or parent may not like a report, or think it is too negative, or think the visit should have been conducted in a manner that is not consistent with the protocol. None of these represent a challenge to a report's legitimacy; concerns that might challenge an endorsement are based on events that stray too far from the protocol.

The Catalpa review of this visit and this report was routine.

The steps Catalpa completed for this review were:

- discussion with the chair about any issues related to the visit before it began
- daily discussion of any issues with the visit chair during the visit
- observation of a portion of the visit
- discussion with the principal regarding any concerns about the visit at the time of the visit
- thorough review of the report in both its pre-release and final version form

The findings from the review are:

1. This team was certified to meet team membership requirements by RIDE staff.
2. This report was produced by a legitimate SALT Visit that was led by a trained SALT Visit Chair and conducted in a manner that is consistent with SALT Visit procedures.
3. The conclusions are legitimate SALT visit conclusions.
4. The report is a legitimate SALT visit report.

Accordingly, Catalpa Ltd. endorses this report.



**CATALPA LTD.**

Thomas A. Wilson, EdD

Catalpa Ltd.

May 23, 2005

## REPORT APPENDIX

### Sources of Evidence for This Report

In order to write this report the team examined test scores, student work, and other documents related to this school. The school improvement plan for Dr. M. H. Sullivan School was the touchstone document for the team. No matter how informative documents may be, however, there is no substitute for being at the school while it is in session—in the classrooms, in the lunchroom, and in the hallways. The team built its conclusions primarily from information about what the students, staff, and administrators think and do during their day. Thus, this visit allowed the team to build informed judgments about the teaching, learning, and support that actually takes place at Dr. M. H. Sullivan School.

The visit team collected its evidence from the following sources of evidence:

- ◆ *direct classroom observation*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *following 7 students for a full day*
- ◆ *observing the work of teachers and staff for a full day*
- ◆ *meeting at scheduled times with the following groups:*
  - teachers*
  - school improvement team*
  - school and district administrators*
  - students*
  - parents*
  - Family Center staff*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *talking with Family Center staff*
- ◆ *reviewing The 90/90/90 Schools: A Case Study from Accountability in Action*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *reviewing COZ documents*
- ◆ *reviewing the Sullivan School Mission Statement*
- ◆ *reviewing Sullivan School Profile,*
- ◆ *reviewing The Sullivan School Report of Progress, 2004*
- ◆ *attending CAP and TST meetings*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *analyzing state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*
- ◆ *reviewing the following documents:*
  - district and school policies and practices*
  - Newport District Strategic Plan, 2001-2006*

*Newport Reflection Summit, August 22, 2003*  
*Newport School Department Progress Reports*  
*Newport Public Schools Teacher Evaluation Program, 2004-2005*  
*Newport Public Schools Teaching, Learning & Professional Development Calendar, 2004-2005*  
*District and School Budgets, 2004-2005*  
*Contract between the Newport School Committee and the Teacher's Association of Newport, 2001-2004*  
*The Sullivan School Family Center and Child Opportunity Zone, A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center document*  
*Looking at Student Work-Yearly Reading Assessments Analysis Protocol*  
*Sullivan School Faculty Meeting Minutes*  
*Sullivan School Self Study*  
*Sullivan School Mission Statement*  
*Sullivan School Family Center and Child Opportunity Zone Program Schedule, Spring 2005*  
*Sullivan School Report of Progress, March 23, 2004*  
*Dr. Michael H. Sullivan School School-Wide Plan to Promote Responsible Student Behavior, 2001-2002*  
*Various press releases*  
*various curricula guides*  
*records of professional development activities*  
*classroom assessments*  
*school improvement plan for Dr. M. H. Sullivan School*  
*district strategic plan*  
*2004 SALT Survey report*  
*classroom textbooks*  
*2004 and 2005 Information Works!*  
*2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries*  
*School and District Report Cards*

### **State Assessment Results for Dr. M. H. Sullivan School**

Assessment results create pieces of evidence that the visit team uses as it conducts its inquiry. The team uses this evidence to shape its efforts to locate critical issues for the school. It also uses this evidence, along with other evidence, to draw conclusions about those issues.

This school's results are from the latest available state assessment information. It is presented here in four different ways:

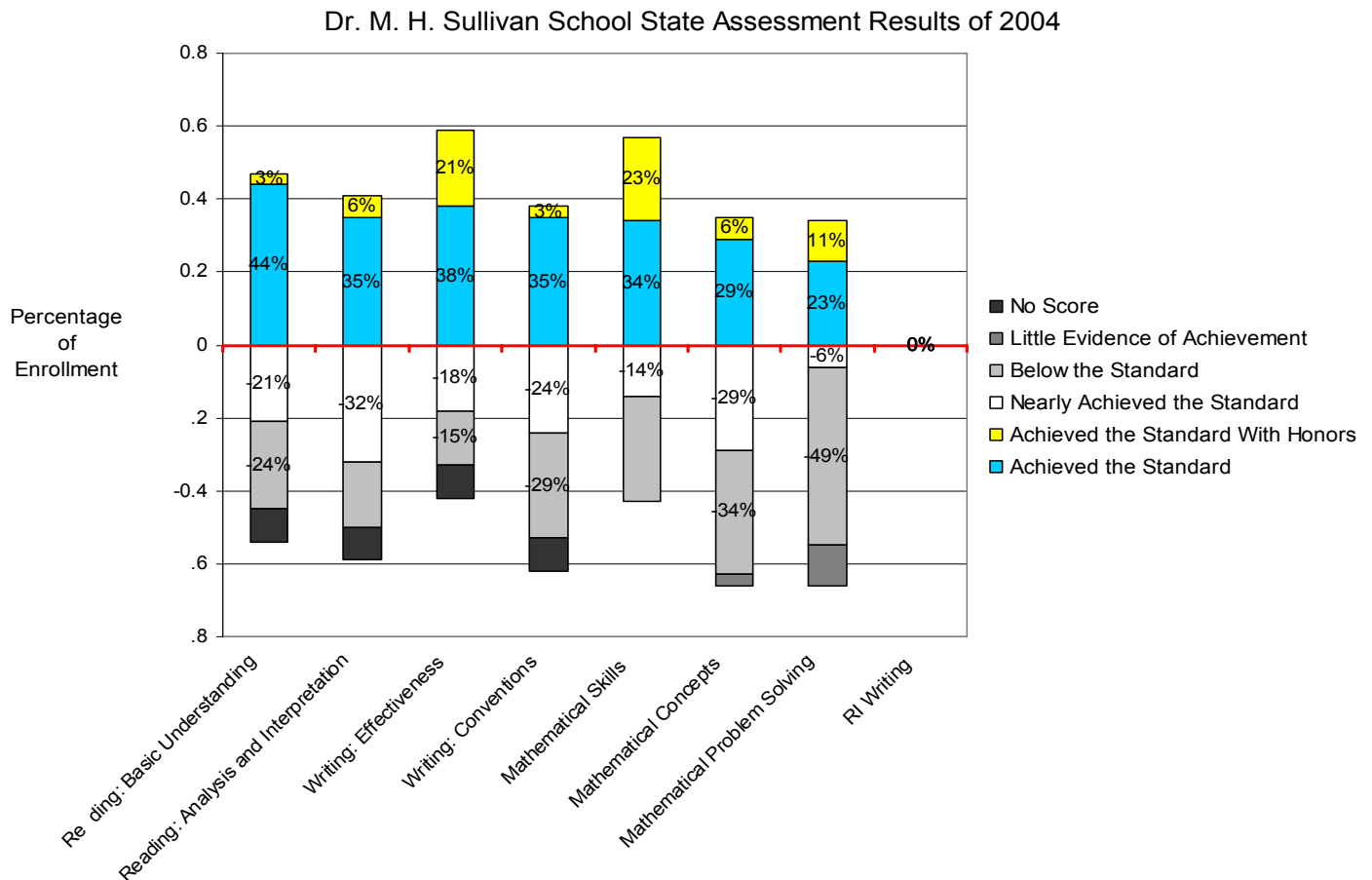
- ◆ *against performance standards;*
- ◆ *across student groups within the school;*
- ◆ *and over time.*



### RESULTS IN RELATION TO PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The first display shows how well the students do in relation to standards in English/Language Arts and mathematics. Student results are shown as the percentage of students taking the test whose score places them in the various categories at, above, or below the performance standard. Endorsed by the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education in 1998, the tested standards can be found in the publication *New Standards Performance Standards*.

**Table1. 2003-04 Student Results on Rhode Island State Assessments**

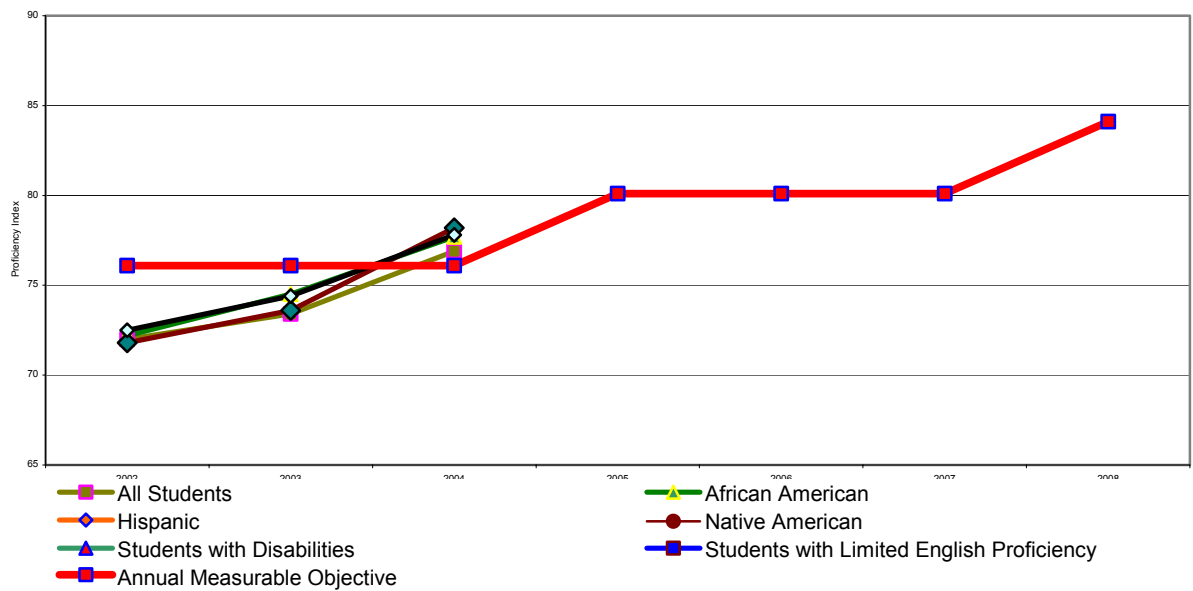


### RESULTS ACROSS STUDENT GROUPS WITHIN THE SCHOOL

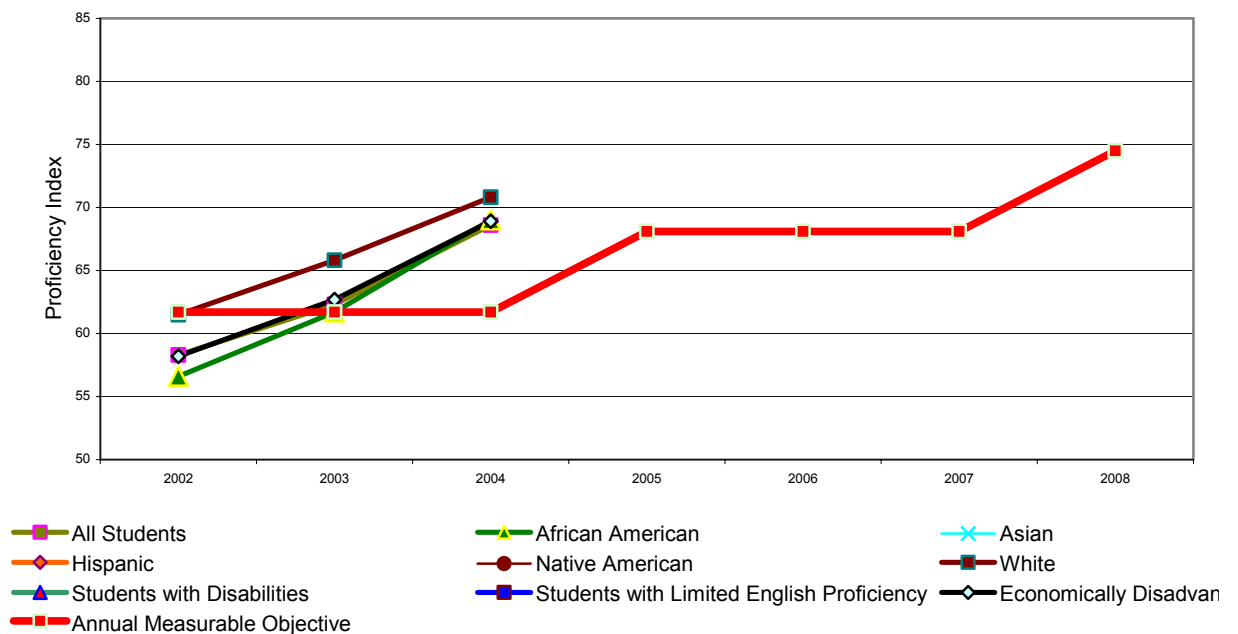
An important way to display student results is across different groups of students with different characteristics who are in the school. This display showing targets and index scores, in accordance with the No Child Left Behind federal legislation creates information about how well the school meets the learning needs of its various students. Since breaking students into these smaller groups can result in groups becoming too small to show accurate results, this display shows the results based on three years of testing. Any student group whose index scores do not meet the targets set by RIDE require additional attention to close its performance gap.

*Table 2. 2002-2004 Student Results across Subgroups*

Annual Proficiency, Dr. M. H. Sullivan School, ELA, Gr. 4



Annual Proficiency, Dr. M. H. Sullivan School, Gr. 4 Math

**REPORT CARD FOR DR. M. H. SULLIVAN SCHOOL**

This Report Card shows the performance of Dr. M. H. Sullivan School compared to the school's annual measurable objectives (AMO).

These report card scores describe Dr. M. H. Sullivan School as a school in need of improvement, making insufficient progress.

*Table 3. Report Card for Dr. M. H. Sullivan School*

## 2004 Rhode Island School Report Card

RI SCHOOL: **DR. M. H. SULLIVAN SCHOOL**

RI DISTRICT: **NEWPORT**

GRADE: **04**

INDEX PROFICIENCY SCORE, 2002-04	ENGLISH LANG. ARTS <b>TARGET SCORE:</b> <b>76.1</b>				MATHEMATICS <b>TARGET SCORE: 61.7</b>			
STUDENT GROUP	THIS SCHOOL	TARGET MET?	THIS DISTRICT	THE STATE	THIS SCHOOL	TARGET MET?	THIS DISTRICT	THE STATE
All Students	<b>76.9</b>	YES	82.2	86.1	<b>68.6</b>	YES	75.6	77.5
African Americans	<b>77.7</b>	YES	76.8	77.8	<b>69</b>	YES	69.9	65.9
Asian	*	YES	*	84.5	*	YES	*	77.1
Hispanic	*	YES	82.3	75.8	*	YES	72.7	65.8
Native Americans	*	YES	*	83.9	*	YES	*	73
White	<b>78.2</b>	YES	85.6	88.5	<b>70.8</b>	YES	79.7	82
Students with Disabilities	*	YES	67.9	69.5	*	YES	68.4	66.4
Students with Limited English Proficiency	*	YES	*	68.9	*	YES	*	61
Students who are Economically Disadvantaged	<b>77.8</b>	YES	78.1	77.8	<b>68.9</b>	YES	70.6	68.4

PERCENT OF STUDENTS TESTED, 2002-04	<b>Target: 95%</b>			
	THIS SCHOOL	TARGET MET?	THIS DISTRICT	THE STATE
English Language Arts	<b>98.3</b>	YES	98.7	99.1
Mathematics	<b>98.3</b>	YES	98.7	99.4

ATTENDAN CE RATE	<b>Target: 90%</b>			
	THIS SCHOOL	TARGET MET?	THIS DISTRICT	THE STATE
	<b>93</b>	YES	92.7	94.8

TARGETS MET/MISSED, THIS SCHOOL		
	TARGETS MET	TARGETS MISSED
English Language Arts Index Score	9	0
Mathematics Index Score	9	0
Percent Tested	2	0
Attendance Rate	1	0

**THIS SCHOOL IS CLASSIFIED AS:**

**Moderately Performing and Improving**

Information Works! data for Dr. M. H. Sullivan School is available at <http://www.ridoe.net>.

**DR. MICHAEL H. SULLIVAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM**

Marisa Albanese  
New England Gas

Christine Arouth  
Family Center

Jennifer Borman  
LAB at Brown University

Samantha Brinz  
Family Center

Christine DiComo  
Teacher

Donna George  
Teacher

Mark McKenna  
New Visions

Mercedes Mellekas  
Lead Teacher

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TAN Representative

Maria Mare-Schulz  
Principal

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